

**CAMDEN COUNTY**

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

**AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**2004**

10/31/03

## **Assessment**

The environmental assessment has been developed by the Camden County Department of Health and Human Services Environmental Division to address environmental issues in Camden County. The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services is a county health department and is the certified local health agency for Camden County pursuant to NJSA 26:3-85 et seq., for the provision of environmental health services under the County Environmental Health Act, (CEHA).

## **County Community**

Camden County has a population of 510,000 and is comprised of 37 municipalities and covers 222 square miles. Camden County is largely urban in the Camden City, Gloucester City and Pennsauken municipalities which border the Delaware River, suburban in the middle as you move southeast and rural in the southeastern most townships of Winslow, Gloucester, and Waterford. The geographic breakdown is roughly 20% urban, 45% suburban, and 35% rural. The population breakdown is roughly 25% urban, 55% suburban and 20% rural. The citizenry is ethnically and racially diverse (White 76.6%, African American 16.2%, Hispanic 7.2%, Asian 3.7%, other 3.4%).

The housing stock is primarily single family dwellings with the majority of the suburban and urban construction being completed prior to 1960. There is currently a residential single family dwelling building boom in the rural municipalities of Gloucester, Winslow and Waterford. The median age in Camden County is 32.8 years and the median income is \$39,340.

Camden County is southeast of the City of Philadelphia and is bordered by Burlington County to the northeast, Atlantic County to the southeast, Gloucester County to the southwest and Philadelphia and the Delaware River to the northwest.

## **Environmental Issues**

### **Clean Air**

Air pollution is a major environmental issue in Camden County. The health risks associated with the inhalation of contaminated air is of major concern to all Camden County residents. We spend a significant amount of time, county wide, in addressing this very important issue. Our urban areas have the bulk of the industry which contributes to our total air pollution load.

Camden County's urban community activists continue to demand clean air for their community. This is quite evident with the law suit to block the construction and opening of St. Lawrence Cement. They also are concerned and fighting against perceived or real environmental racism and the potential for the permitting of new sources of air pollution within their community.

An air toxics project has been funded by the EPA and is currently in progress with the NJDEP and Camden County Department of Health and Human Services working cooperatively. The project models and maps 38 air toxics and the particulates pm 2.5 and pm 10 in a census tract known as Waterfront South. In addition, the project will conduct air testing for these contaminants and compared the results with the predicted permitted discharges. Initial data, which is not yet complete, is showing the flawed NJDEP permitting process which only looks at one pollutant at a

time and does not consider the background of existing air pollution contaminants or the synergistic effects of many pollutants on the exposed population. 7 chemical contaminants have been identified as above the health benchmark when the chemical plumes are mapped in the project area.

Air pollution, especially particulate, is also a major concern in the Berlin Township, Berlin Borough area due to a concrete plant that is situated in a residential area. The plant, Pre-Mix, has been inspected over 100 times in the past 5 years with numerous violations for air pollution and noise. Pre-Mix has spent in excess of \$750,000 in prevention and has been fined over \$100,000. The number of complaints has slowly decreased and the NJDEP has required stack testing and a dust management plan to address fugitive dust problems at the site.

Camden County will continue to make clean air a top priority in its environmental protection programs. We will aggressively pursue violators and penalize where appropriate. We will complete the air toxics program in Waterfront South and look for other air toxics projects where needed and where manpower and funding is available.

## **Clean Water**

Camden County's water needs are varied as the urban and suburban communities utilize public water supplies and our rural community is almost entirely dependant on private well water. Clean water and the health risks associated with the consumption of contaminated water are a major environmental concern in Camden County.

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services has recently become aware of lead contamination associated with schools public water supply. Camden City had a significant lead contamination problem which took 2 years to solve. Over half of the public schools had lead levels which exceeded the 15 ppm potable water standard. The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services had to force the city to address this issue. The NJDEP helped out with funding to install automatic flushing systems which flush out the dissolved lead in the pipes. The flushing systems and removal of fixtures that have high lead in the plumbing has been successful in eliminating the lead problem with the potable water.

Other school systems have had similar problems and have successfully addressed the issue with similar remedies. We have communicated with our school systems county wide to make them aware of the problem and remedies.

Putchak Well field contamination is also a major concern in Camden City. From 1975 until 1998, contaminated well water with high, volatile organic compounds, VOC's and chromium from the Putchak Well Fields was distributed to an estimated 50,000 Camden City residents. The exposure is being studied by the N.J. State Health Department with a significant cancer study. Local environmental activists and groups have sued the City to have water bills be repaid from the past 20 years. The suit has been thrown out and the cancer study is still incomplete.

The Private Well Testing Act has exposed the need for regular private well testing by the owner. Required testing at the time of realty transaction has revealed significant private well contamination. Gross alpha, nitrate, volatile organic compounds and mercury violations of the potable water standards is occurring in roughly 35% of our realty transactions. As part of our normal office protocol, we notify the owner or real estate agency of the infraction, provide treatment options, provide a spill fund application if the contaminant is mercury or a volatile organic compound and test the private wells that are adjacent to the known contaminated well. With this protocol, we are able to quickly locate potential contaminated well clusters.

Public awareness and education are extremely important in getting private well owners to test annually for contaminants. We have been aggressive in this area but unsuccessful in convincing well owners to spend \$400 to \$500 per year on annual water testing.

Recreational use of our water ways continues to be an important issue in Camden County. We mobilize each year to conduct surface water testing to help determine the water bodies overall health. In 2002, we posted all of Camden County's property that bordered waterways with fish advisory signs. Included on the signage was a telephone number and web site address to get the individual fish consumption restrictions.

Camden County will continue to educate the public regarding the need for private well testing. We will conduct well testing for contiguous properties of contaminated wells and search for contaminated well clusters. We will educate our school superintendents on the need to test their water supply for lead contamination, and if contaminated, assist with remediation techniques. Healthy surface water will continue to be a priority and we will continue to support the surface water testing program requested in the CEHA grant.

### **Homeland Security/Hazardous Materials Team Preparedness.**

The post 911 era in the Emergency Response Community has completely altered the direction of the haz mat community. We are currently preparing for dirty bombs, bioterrorism incidents, nuclear events, terrorism events and nerve agent exposures. Funding has become available to purchase equipment and training. A significant amount of time is being expended researching equipment, training, drilling, and planning with other Camden County and State agencies. Camden County is also meeting with other contiguous counties to plan and drill together just in case a major haz mat event occurs. We are also attempting to write contracts between counties to provide haz mat services. One important feature of the contract is to address liability issues between counties.

Camden County has developed a haz mat task force to address hazardous materials, WMD, Weapons of Mass Destruction and CBRN, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear threats. We currently have 7 haz mat teams participating in the task force which include Cherry Hill Township, Gloucester City, Waterford Township, Gloucester Township, Bellmawr Borough, The Camden County Sheriffs Department Bomb Squad and the Camden County Health Department Haz Mat Team. Associate members of the task force are the Camden County Prosecutors Office, Camden County Communications and the Camden County Office of Emergency Management. The task force meets every 2 months and discusses equipment purchasing, drilling, training and other issues facing the response community. We drill together on a regular basis and purchase like equipment which allows familiarity with other unit's equipment should one agencies equipment break down. This partnership has become an invaluable asset to Camden County and is quickly becoming a model to be duplicated throughout the State and Country.

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services will continue to pursue WMD/CBRN grant opportunities. Training, drilling and planning for this type of incident will be a top priority. Obtaining formalized agreements to provide haz mat, WMD, CBRN services between counties in Southern New Jersey is also a high priority.

## **Noise**

Camden County approved a noise control ordinance in 1993. We have a very aggressive noise enforcement program in place. Camden County's biggest noise issue comes from combination industrial residential zoning practices that have occurred in the past. Pre-Mix Industries has been the major noise problem for 2003 and probably 2004. Pre-Mix Industries is located in Berlin Borough and is surrounded by residential properties. The receiving properties are located in Berlin Township. Camden County has cited Pre-Mix at least 6 times for noise violations in the past 2 years and a \$9000 penalty is due for past violations. Some progress has been made toward reducing violations and penalties. Truck traffic and backup beepers continue to be an issue and will present a quality of life and enforcement issue in 2004.

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services will continue to provide noise control and enforcement throughout the County. Residential construction adjacent or near industrial and agricultural zoning and the increased motor vehicle traffic and the associated noise will be our noise control issues for 2004 and beyond.

## **Underground Storage Tanks**

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services currently participates in a pilot project that assists in the removal of home heating oil tanks. This project enables residential property owners the opportunity to remove an oil tank and receive a document from the NJDEP that the tank was removed in accordance with current NJDEP regulations. This project is very helpful to residents in that it may help them from getting scammed from unscrupulous contractors. Camden County oversight enables us to advise the resident that there are being taken advantage of. This project is also very helpful with property resale. Having a letter in your possession from the NJDEP that the tank was removed in accordance with NJDEP regulations is helpful when the buyer discovers that an oil tank has been removed.

Camden County also inspects regulated tanks to determine compliance with tank leak detection programs. This program has been very successful in catching violators whose tank leak detection programs are not working or shut off. In several cases, we have determined that tanks were leaking from the inspection when the operator was not aware of the leak. The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services will continue with the underground storage tank program if funding from the state is maintained at its current level.

## **Solid Waste Inspections/Enforcement**

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services spends a significant amount of its resources to inspect solid waste facilities, department of public works operations and complaints. In addition, we have an interlocal agreement with the Pollution Control Finance Authority to enforce solid waste registration violations. We will continue with the current efforts in this program in 2004 and complete the first complete round of department of public works inspections for Camden County.

## **Other Environmental Issues**

Many other environmental issues face Camden County residents that are not illustrated but are no less important. They are Pesticide Control, Indoor Air Quality, Asbestos Exposure, Occupational Exposure to Toxic Substances, Electromagnetic Fields, Hazardous Waste Sites, Radon and a host of other unidentified issues. We will continue to act as the County lead in environmental services and act as a resource for all Camden County stakeholders.

## **Staffing and Resources**

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services currently maintains an environmental field staff of 8 and 3 supervisors who conduct administrative duties with some limited field work. We are committed to continue with the previous illustrated environmental activities as long as funding continues at its current levels. Expansion of current programs or adding new programs without increased funding from the County, State or Federal Government is out of the question.